

Countryside Stewardship target statement for **Berkshire and Marlborough Downs**

Your application is scored and a decision made on the points awarded. Both top priorities and lower priorities score points but you should select at least one top priority.

Scoring is carried out by...

Choosing priorities

To apply you should choose at least one of the top priorities, and you can choose lower priorities - this may help with your application.

Top priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Biodiversity	Priority habitats
	Priority species
Water	Water quality
	Flood and coastal risk management
Historic environment	Designated historic and archaeological features
	Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance
Woodland priorities	Woodland management
	Woodland planting
Landscape	
Climate Change	
Multiple environmental benefits	

Lower priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Lower priorities	Water quality

	Archaeological and historic features
	Woodland

Biodiversity - top priorities

Priority habitats

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that maintains, restores and creates priority habitats.

Maintain priority habitat such as:

- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland fen
- Lowland meadow
 - Wood pasture and parkland
- Chalk river

Restore priority habitats (especially proposals which make existing sites bigger or help join up habitat networks) such as:

- Lowland meadow
- Lowland fen
- Lowland calcareous grassland
 - Chalk river

Create priority habitats – to extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation. Defra is looking for proposals to create priority habitat that will also contribute significantly to improvements in:

- water quality
- air quality
- flood and coastal risk management

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Proposals to maintain or restore Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs including SACs) with eligible features are a priority, and both on-site and off-site options (such as to reduce diffuse water and air pollution impacts on SSSIs) are relevant.

Priority species

For the majority of priority species found on the priority habitats listed above, their ecological requirements can be met through good generic habitat management. Managing for those essential

elements associated with priority habitats - in particular bare ground, areas of scrub, varying sward structures will allow these species to thrive.

A number of priority species associated with the area require specific and tailored management and advice. You should carry out land management practices and capital works that meet the specific needs of the following priority species:

- *Emberiza calandra subsp. calandra/clanceyi* Corn Bunting (bird)
 - *Vertigo moulinsiana* Desmoulin's whorl snail (snail)
- *Vanellus vanellus* Lapwing (bird)
- *Burhinus oedicephalus* Stone curlew (bird)
- *Streptopelia turtur* Turtle dove (bird)
- *Poecile montanus subsp. Kleinschmidti* Willow Tit (bird)
- *Euphydryas aurinia* Marsh Fritillary (butterfly)
- *Hamearis lucina* Duke of Burgundy (butterfly)
- *Grapholita pallifrontana* Liquorice Piercer (moth)
- *Noctua orbona* Lunar Yellow Underwing (moth)
- *Decticus verrucivorus* Wartbiter (invertebrate)
- *Anaptychia ciliaris subsp. Ciliaris* (lichen)
- *Rhinolophus hipposideros* Lesser Horseshoe Bat (mammal)
- *Bupleurum rotundifolium* Thorow-wax (vascular plant)
- *Iberis amara* Wild Candytuft (vascular plant)

Further guidance on the priority species in this area that require more tailored targeted management and advice, as listed, can be found:

- [Links to guidance on those bespoke species' needs found in this area]

Parts of this area are targeted for their woodland bird assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for four or more species (of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Marsh Tit, Lesser Redpoll and Hawfinch). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- maintain/enhance conditions for woodland birds

This area has also been identified as a hotspot for wild pollinators, farmland birds and other wildlife associated with the wider countryside – through the Wild Pollinator and farm Wildlife package implement these options to make sure these species thrive all year around:

- option 1
- option 2

Water - top priorities

Water quality

The area has particular issues with:

- phosphates, nitrates and sediment in the Kennet, Bristol Avon Rural and Hampshire Avon catchments.
- Phosphates, nitrates, sediment and pesticides in the South Chilterns, Upper and Middle Test and Ock catchments.
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This includes:

- Nitrates affecting groundwater drinking sources near Woodsend, near ? (Bradfield windmill), near Wedham, near Brightw?, Ashdown Park; Ogbourne St George; Marlborough; Hungerford; Leckhampstead; Bishops Canning and Wantage.
- Pesticides affecting drinking water sources from the Lower Test and also from the Thames downstream of this NCA, from Cookham to Egham to Teddington.
- Phosphates, nitrates and sediment affecting protected aquatic species in the Bristol Avon.
- Phosphates and sediment affecting the River Lambourn SAC, Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC and Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC. Phosphates, nitrates and sediment affecting the River Avon SAC. Phosphates and nitrates affecting the Solent SAC.
- Phosphates, nitrates and sediment affecting the River Test and Itchen SSSI.

Comment [m1]: Awaiting information/confirmation

You should consider options and capital works that address these issues. These are detailed in X guidance document. These options help to improve water quality by controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants. For this area, this includes:

- nutrients from fertilisers and manures
- sediment problems from soil erosion and run-off
- pesticides from their use and disposal

Flood and Coastal Risk Management

- Applications that select options to address flood risk issues within the area will also be welcomed, primarily within the following flood risk priority areas:
 - the catchment of the Kennet upstream Marlborough, upstream of Ramsbury and between Ramsbury and Hungerford.
 - the catchment of the Lambourn, upstream of Great Shefford.

You should consider options that:

- reduce the amount and rate of surface water run-off
- reduce soil erosion
- slow the movement of floodwaters on floodplains

These are detailed in X guidance document.

Historic environment - top priorities

Active management is important for the long term survival of historic environment remains and to protect them against damage and decay brought about through cultivation, scrub growth, burrowing animals or poor maintenance. These features cannot be recreated once they have been lost.

In this area there are a number of designated heritage features and other historic environment features reflecting a rich history of human settlement and occupation dating back to the Palaeolithic. There is a high density of prehistoric monuments including Neolithic long barrows, Bronze Age round barrows, enclosures, hill forts, stone circles and chalk-cut figures. In addition, there are cropmarks, historic boundaries and historic routeways such as the Ridgeway. The Avebury World Heritage Site indicates the international significance of the historic environment in this area. Traces of continuing activity are present in the remains of Roman villas and field patterns, Saxon boundaries such as the Wansdyke, Norman motte and bailey castles, medieval strip lynchets, mills and wood pasture, through to post-medieval ornamental parklands, canals and WWII pillboxes. Historic farmsteads typically have a courtyard plan and incorporate large timber framed barns and cattle yards. Traditional building materials include timber, brick, thatch or tile and sometimes chalk, flint, cob walls and sarsen. The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified [XXX %] of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from arable cultivation, animal burrowing and scrub growth¹.

Comment [m2]: Awaiting information

The following historic environment features are a high priority for active management in this area:

- Designated Features - archaeological features of national significance (Scheduled Monuments), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG) and Registered Battlefields (RB).
- Designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings.
- Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE), particularly if they are within the Avebury World Heritage Site.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass
- reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this offers a suitable level of protection
- remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features

^{1 1} Historic environment information can be found in three locations; 'Key facts and data, section 9', Description – The landscape through time' and 'Analysis of sense of history'. Look specifically for information about Scheduled Monuments and those at risk. If the at risk information is not present make a specific request to English Heritage at the stakeholder validation stage.

- maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible 'above ground' features
 - maintain and restore historic water management systems, including those associated with water meadows and designed water bodies
 - restore historic buildings that are assessed as a priority in the area.
 - address the condition of Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, through the proactive maintenance or restoration of structures or features that make a major contribution to the design intentions or feel of the parkland, provide for their biodiversity and amenity value].
 - address the condition of Registered Historic Battlefields and maximises opportunities for its protection, enhancement and amenity value].
 - address the condition of the Avebury World Heritage Site and maximises opportunities for its protection, enhancement and amenity value.
 - deal with specific issues that are causing damage or decay to archaeological and historic features, but which are not covered by standard options.

Woodland - top priorities

Woodland management

Management of all woodland to improve structure and species mix is important for biodiversity and to make them more robust in relation to future threats such as climate change, pests and diseases.

Certain types of woodland are a high priority for bringing into management, including:

- protected woodland – those designated for their national biodiversity value
- priority woodland habitat – other unmanaged broadleaved woodland
- priority species – all woodland within current red squirrel range, or within areas important for woodland butterfly and woodland bird species
- Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) restoration – conversion of conifer plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to broadleaf woodland where they are in close proximity to existing broadleaf woodland
- United Kingdom Forestry Standard – unmanaged conifer woodland within catchments subject to eutrophication and acidification, both to reduce pressures on the water environment and improve biodiversity

Woodlands not included in the categories above are a lower priority for management.

All management should comply with the United Kingdom Forestry Standard and other relevant guidance such as 'Managing Ancient and Native Woodland in England'.

High priority woodlands or woodland management initiatives in this area include:

- [example 1](#)

- example 2

Comment [m3]: Awaiting information

Woodland planting

High priority areas for the planting of new woodlands include:

- biodiversity – planting to buffer and link existing woodlands and other semi natural open habitats within priority woodland habitat networks
- water quality – planting designed to reduce and intercept diffuse pollution from agriculture
- flood risk – planting designed to increase infiltration of heavy rain into the ground, reduce erosion, or slow the flow of floodwaters on floodplains

In order to provide the required biodiversity and/or water benefits, new woodland planting needs to be in the right part of the landscape and to the right design.

High priority areas for new planting or local initiatives prioritising woodland creation in this area include:

- example 1
- example 2

Comment [m4]: Awaiting information

Landscape – top priorities

High priorities are the management, restoration or re-creation of landscape features that contribute significantly to the local character by reinforcing the overall pattern and scale of the landscape, together with other important features that give an area its unique and distinctive sense of place.

Top priority in the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs is the restoration of these features:

- historic hedgerows
- in-field trees associated with historic parkland and wood pasture
- small woods contributing to historic landscape character
- arable margins
- permanent pasture adjacent to rivers and across historic chalk downland
- bankside trees beside the chalk rivers and in the Vale of Pewsey

Climate Change

Climate change will pose variable threats and opportunities in different landscapes. Priority should be given to targeted features and issues that are particularly vulnerable to or affected by climate change.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that help to:

- make existing priority habitat sites bigger

- extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation
- reduce the impacts of climate change on local communities, for example by targeted planting of woodland to reduce flood risk
- reduce loss of carbon and emissions of other greenhouse gases
- increase carbon uptake, for example by tree planting
- increase carbon storage, for example by converting arable land to permanent grassland
- provide shade for wildlife and livestock

Multiple environmental benefits

Opportunities for multi-objective agreements

You should look to provide for multiple priorities by selecting options that achieve multiple environmental benefits.

In the **Berkshire and Marlborough Downs** you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- around the existing network of semi-natural habitat in the floodplains and beside the watercourses, create new wetland habitat and lower the intensity of land management in order to benefit biodiversity, landscape character, water quality, flood risk and historic features.
- focus arable reversion where it will protect and link historic features and semi-natural habitat, for example across the Avebury World Heritage Site and along the Ridgeway, and seek additional benefits for water quality and landscape character in these places.
- reduce the intensity of land management across the chalk and greensand, including sink holes, in order to lower pollution risks to the aquifer and also to conserve soils, biodiversity and historic features.
- restore historic hedgerows and maintain a network of small woods on the lower slopes in order to manage water flow, decrease soil erosion, create wildlife habitats and corridors, and strengthen landscape character.
- select options such as the use of rural sustainable drainage systems, buffer strips and erosion control in the chalk river catchments, particularly the Kennet, in order to improve both water quality and support flood risk management.

Lower priorities

You should select one of the top priorities. However, you can also select lower priorities as well as this will attract points used to score your application.

You should consider the following other priorities that are of specific interest in this area.

Water quality - lower priorities

Water quality

- Pesticides in the Kennet catchment affecting drinking sources near Reading (Kennet, Foudry Brook and Clayhill Brook).

Historic environment - lower priorities

The Historic environment features set out below are a lower priority.

- Maintain designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings.
- Undesignated SHINE features of medium and low Significance
- Priority Undesignated Historic Parklands

Woodland – lower priorities

Woodland Management

Woodlands not included in the top priority categories listed above are a lower priority for management but may still be supported.

Woodland Planting

Areas are prioritised for new planting based on their potential to create biodiversity and water benefits. Woodland planting schemes are scored depending on where the proposed scheme is in relation to the opportunity maps for woodland planting in England and how well the planting design will benefit biodiversity and water.

Lower priorities for appropriately designed biodiversity schemes exist across the whole of England. Opportunities for new woodland planting for water only exist in certain parts of England.